



Testimony before the Children's Committee
February 17, 2015

In Support of

HB 5461: An Act Imposing a Tax on Sugary Soft Drinks and Candies,
HB 6664: An Act Concerning the Health of Children, and
HB 6595: An Act Exempting Baby Diapers from the Sales Tax

Good Afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Children's Committee, my name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut! a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization, in that position I was a member of the Task Force on Childhood Obesity and I sit on the steering committee of the CT Coalition Against Childhood Obesity. I am here today in support of three bills, HB 5461 An Act Imposing a Tax on Sugary Soft Drinks and Candies, HB 6664 An Act Concerning the Health of Children and HB 6595 An Act Exempting Baby Diapers from the Sales Tax

Childhood obesity is a critical public health crisis that must be addressed through thoughtful public policy. **HB 5461 An Act Imposing a Tax on Sugary Soft Drinks and Candies** puts us on the right path. End Hunger CT! fully supports this legislation.

The average American drinks 45 gallons of soda a year, while 44% of children ages 19 -24 months and 70% of 2-5 year olds have a sugary drink **per day**. These drinks are devoid of nutrition yet full of health risks, including high blood pressure and heart disease while doubling the risk of tooth decay in children. The evidence is stronger than ever that sugar sweetened beverages are a trigger for obesity. They do not satiate the way other drinks do so children are getting calories without the feeling of fullness, thereby often eating more, in addition to the added sugar.

Currently the price of sugar laden drinks are often less than that of milk or other healthy substitutes, creating a price advantage for them. Many children rely on milk for its health benefits yet compared to sugary drinks it is expensive. Most of our bone growth is done by the time we are 17 so it is imperative that calcium is available during child and young adulthood. Many children rely on schools to provide this staple to them. What happens when schools is out? Sugary drinks, due to their price point and sugary taste is often the choice.

Children and young adults are a prime marketing target for sugary drinks. They are everywhere from rock and sports stars who promote it to placement in favorite television shows and commercials. The cost of increased soda and sugary drink consumption is one that we all feel directly. Lost work time, illness and other medical costs due to obesity and heart disease are caused by these drinks. Children who drink a lot of sugary drinks will suffer from these health

risks as they grow into adults. This legislation allows children, and their parents, the personal freedom, and knowledge, to recognize that there may be a healthier substitute. We know that there is a direct causation between increased price and decreased consumption – we see it with many products.

By adding a tax on each ounce of liquid the amount of sugary drinks consumed will decrease while increasing available funds to the state. The state will not be encouraging the consumption of drink that increases the already burgeoning obesity epidemic and support the health and well-being of our state.

HB 6664 An Act Concerning the Health of Children is a step in the right direction and is needed. As a member of The Task Force on Childhood Obesity it became apparent that there is specific information on the health of Connecticut's children unavailable. DCF and DPH working together can look at many areas of a child's life, and we urge them to look at how obesity affects so many of our children. I would suggest that CT State Department of Education (SDE) be included in the effort as most of the federal child nutrition programs are administered by SDE. As a member of the CT Coalition against Childhood Obesity we are looking into how to use BMI as a surveillance tool. It is clear we need an ongoing measurement to assess how our local and state policies are faring. Through the "Blue sheets", the semi-regular health reports sent to schools, there is a mechanism to gather the measurement however it is a massive job that must be implemented in a coordinated way.

Finally, EHC! supports **HB 6595 An Act Exempting Baby Diapers from the Sales Tax**. It is good public policy. Diapers are a necessity. Every penny counts, especially with little ones in the home. Diapers need not compete with food or other necessities. SNAP benefits cannot be used for items such as diapers, and other sanitary items. Many food pantries do not have excess diapers. There is a diaper bank and it is over extended. We know that diapers are a big need for many. Again, like the soda tax this is a public policy decision that the state can make that will set a standard. We urge the committee to vote yes on HB 6595 An Act Exempting Baby Diapers from the Sales Tax out of committee.

Thank you for your time today.

SUGARY DRINKS ARE THE #1 SOURCE OF ADDED SUGAR IN OUR DIETS



46 GALLONS

Americans drink an average
of **46 GALLONS** of sugary drinks each year

27%

Just one sugary drink per day increases
an adult's risk of becoming overweight by 27%



7+

Drinking **7 OR MORE** sugary drinks a week
could increase your risk of dying from
cardiovascular disease

16 tsp.

One 20 oz. cola has
16 TEASPOONS of sugar



1/3

1 OUT OF 3 cancer deaths in the United States
is linked to excess body weight, poor nutrition,
and/or physical inactivity

26%

Just one sugary drink a day increases
the risk of type 2 diabetes by 26%



\$6 BILLION

Sugary drinks contribute to high rates of diabetes,
some cancers, obesity and heart disease that cost
Illinoisans over **\$6 BILLION** a year in unnecessary
health care costs

RETHINK YOUR DRINK

Visit preventobesity.org to learn more about how
to support the Healthy Eating Active Living Act


**Illinois Alliance
to Prevent Obesity**

This message was funded in part by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, an initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and American Heart Association.